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WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION CANADA

July - September 2002

15 Years of Working with the West!

On August 4, 1987, the doors opened to the new offices of Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Winnipeg. People were lined up to consult with staff about business and economic development opportunities across the West.

Today, WD delivers its many programs through 100 points of service, reaching out to the diverse groups through WD's Western Canada Business Service Network. In addition to the WD offices, Canada Business Service Centres, offices of the Women's Enterprise Initiative, Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) and Francophone Economic Development Organizations meet the needs of entrepreneurs in all areas of the West – urban, rural and remote communities. And, Aboriginal economic development services are increasing the number, size and markets of Aboriginal businesses.

WD is strengthening and diversifying the western economy through programs and services that inspire *innovation*, encourage *entrepreneurship* and build *sustainable communities*. It continues to be a voice of the West in national decision-making. And western Canadians are directly involved in determining

priorities for development and deciding on the best use of resources.

For example, WD-sponsored loan funds have helped emerging and export-oriented small businesses gain access to financing through partnerships with financial institutions.

From the mid-1990s until March 31, 2002, CFDC loans worth \$320 million have created or maintained over 38,000 jobs and levered capital loans from other sources worth \$493 million. Loans through the Women's Enterprise Initiative offices totalling over \$18 million have created or maintained over 1,600 jobs and levered another \$15 million from other sources.

These investments have produced results that are helping the West move strongly into the knowledge-based economy, building small businesses and consolidating partnerships in both the public and private sector to share the costs of major new initiatives.

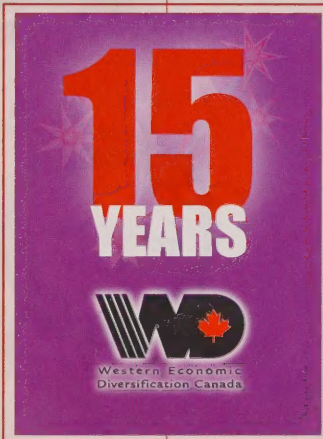
In the years ahead, Western Economic Diversification Canada will continue to advance the interests of Western Canada, pursuing a cooperative approach with urban and rural communities to ensure they remain viable, productive and sustainable. ♦



Canada

www.wd.gc.ca

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A MESSAGE FROM *Stephen Owen*



*Stephen Owen
Secretary of State
(Western Economic
Diversification)*



This year, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) celebrates 15 years of working with the West. This is an opportunity to recognize the diverse role that WD has played in building sustainable communities in the West, a region of vast opportunity and tremendous potential.

The key to sustainable communities is partnerships: tripartite Urban Development Agreements, federal-provincial Western Economic Partnership Agreements, national programs delivered in the West such as the Infrastructure Canada Program, and WD's Western Canada Business Service Network. The Department plays a

strategic role in mobilizing all levels of government and community stakeholders to capitalize on local priorities for sustainable economic development.

WD is also a catalyst for establishing multi-party agreements that address important issues: urban renewal, economic adjustment, job creation among disadvantaged groups and skills development. Through cooperative approaches that bring government, industry and community partners together, WD assists communities to find local solutions to local challenges.

WD's commitment to people, sharing knowledge and generating opportunity has contributed significantly to economic prosperity in Western Canada. The Department will continue to work in and for the West by delivering programs and services that inspire innovation, encourage entrepreneurship and build sustainable communities. ♦

A 10-Year Vision of Community Economic Development

by Marc Butikofer

Community Futures Development Corporation of the North Okanagan

The beautiful Okanagan Valley and Vernon, B.C., provided the backdrop for the **Western Canada CED Summit** held on June 25-27, 2002. The Summit enabled community leaders from across the West to discuss innovative and sustainable strategies that will guide community economic development (CED) activities for the next 10 years.

Hosted by the Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) of the North Okanagan and Greater Vernon Services, the summit was preceded by four provincial meetings. The provincial meetings enabled CED practitioners to discuss past, present and future issues. These discussions were then used to develop the agenda for the western summit. The views of over 800 practitioners were heard.

Four major "best practice" themes emerged to become the focus of summit workshops:

- social, environmental and economic;
- human resource development and training;
- CED communication, networking and planning; and
- CED program and organization financial funding.

Participants came from various backgrounds, including rural, urban, Inuit, First Nations and Métis communities. They worked together to establish common ground, build partnerships and forge innovative strategies that could be applied across the West. They were also able to network with other CED practitioners.

WD's Secretary of State Stephen Owen provided an opening address to the Summit. Participants also heard presentations from various players in the CED field, including Senator Ross Fitzpatrick, David Baxter of the Urban Futures Institute in Vancouver and Brian Tobin, former Minister of Industry.

Following the summit on June 28th, members of the western CFDCs met for a one-day session to define their role in community economic development based on the information gathered during the event.

As participants return to their communities, they will be able to build on new alliances and establish the innovative strategies they discussed. The summit has been another step in an ongoing process towards building a viable and sustainable West.

The summit was an initiative of the Pan-West Community Futures Network and Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). For more information on the Western Canada CED Summit, visit the summit Web site at: www.cedsummit.com. ♦

Helping Communities

Long recognized for providing services to small businesses, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is also very active in bringing together government, industry and community partners to manage economic development issues.

Promoting the development and diversification of the western Canadian economy is part of WD's mandate. One of the Department's greatest assets is its ability to address the distinct concerns of each of the four western provinces. This flexibility is vitally important because of the diverse and complex nature of the West. It enables WD to work with different groups to tailor programs that reflect local needs and resources.

British Columbia's coastal communities were adversely affected by the downturn in the Pacific salmon fishery.

As a partner in the Government of Canada's **Pacific Fisheries Adjustment and Restructuring Program**, WD stepped in to encourage development and diversification in the region.



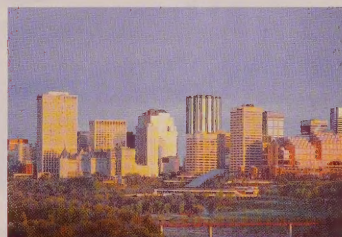
"Carving into the Millennium" at the U'mista Cultural Centre — part of the expansion and renovation that has allowed tourism-based businesses to thrive at the Centre.

The initiative provided more than \$19.45 million, and leveraged an additional

\$47.45 million from local, provincial and federal sources, to fund 102 projects in coastal communities.

Over the two-year lifespan of the CEAI, strategic investments were made in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities that had been dependant on fishing. Over 70 per cent of the funding supported projects in small communities that were especially hard hit.

Hiring outreach workers was instrumental in helping remote First Nations communities' complete proposals to access CEAI funding. This assistance enabled them to develop project ideas, which in turn created new opportunities.



According to the Conference Board of Canada, Edmonton is expected to lead the country with the highest growth rate in 2002. (View of Edmonton skyline.)¹

In 2000, Economic Development Edmonton (EDE) began to develop a strategy to accelerate economic growth within the Greater Edmonton region.

The strategy would also help the city to remain competitive

in an increasingly globalized economy.

WD partnered with EDE initially to conduct an economic diagnostic assessment of the Alberta Capital Region. Strategies were developed. WD also provided assistance to launch the project and identify the action to be taken.

The **Greater Edmonton Competitiveness Strategy** has pulled together major public and private sector

¹ Photo provided by Economic Development Edmonton.

Achieve Sustainability

stakeholders in the region and cultivated a spirit of cooperation at all levels of industry. Many regional challenges faced by various industries are being tackled and addressed.

This strategy will accelerate economic growth in the Greater Edmonton region and create further employment opportunities.

Economic Development Brandon needed a plan to guide future development.



Building strong communities requires a variety of tools. WD is helping to ensure that the City of Brandon will have a strategy for strong future economic growth. (View of bustling 18th Street in Brandon.)

Brandon, the second largest city in Manitoba, has experienced rapid economic growth over the past five years.

Just six months ago, WD collaborated with the City of Brandon to develop a

strategic plan to guide the development of the city. This project saw the creation of the 20-year **Brandon Economic Development Strategic Plan** that: identifies strengths and niche marketing opportunities; takes advantage of existing relationships between the city and the adjacent municipalities; creates a targeted economic development strategy; and assesses existing and potential opportunities.

Brandon Mayor Reg Atkinson indicated that Brandon has been repositioned in the rapidly changing global economy. Once considered a remote location, Brandon is now perceived to be fully integrated into the North

American marketplace. The strategic plan will guide future economic development and support Brandon's continued growth.

Moose Jaw remains a vibrant, dynamic community



Minister Ralph Goodale thanks a "Tunnels of Little Chicago" tour guide. The tunnels and trolley (in background) received funding from WD to ease the reduction in operations of 15 Wing Moose Jaw and its transition to a NFTC. (July 9, 1999)

following the downsizing of the Department of National Defence's 15 Wing air base and its transition to a NATO Flight Training Centre. With assistance from WD, Moose Jaw is shaping its own future – one that is more prosperous than ever.

WD invested in 12 projects that support tourism, small business development and urban infrastructure under the

Moose Jaw Base Transition Initiative. Projects included: construction of a visitor information services centre; expansion of the Burrowing Owl interpretive centre; purchase of a replica of a historic Moose Jaw trolley; purchase of the Army & Navy Building for a future arts and cultural centre; construction of a new underpass to improve traffic in the area of CPR's high-speed refuelling centre; revitalization of the downtown area, and recovery of contaminated land.

These and other job-creating projects helped to stimulate the local economy and provide Moose Jaw residents with new opportunities and a positive business perspective. ♦

²Photo provided by Economic Development Brandon.

Infrastructure Canada Program Helps to Build Sustainable Communities

by Sherry Brownlee

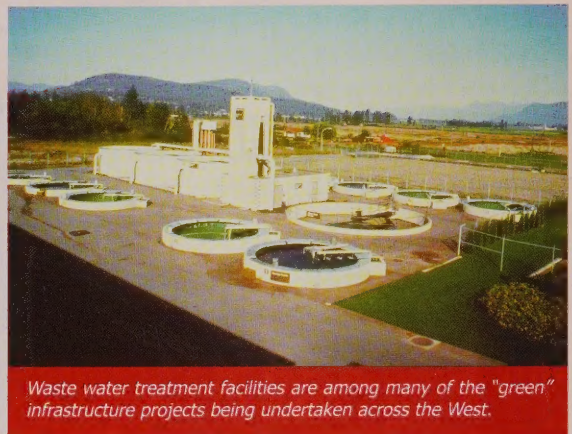
The Government of Canada launched the six-year **Infrastructure Canada Program** in 2000 to renew and enhance Canada's physical infrastructure. It is an excellent example of how federal, provincial and municipal governments are working together to improve the quality of life in towns, cities and rural communities. The program emphasizes local input and involvement. Municipalities suggest the majority of projects funded through this agreement.

"Green" projects targeting water and wastewater systems and solid waste management are the first priority. Other priorities include local transportation, culture and recreation, tourism, rural and remote telecommunications, and affordable housing. The program has been quick to achieve results.

By the end of April 2002, the **Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program** had announced 109 projects, representing a total investment of over \$127 million. Projects include water treatment plant upgrades, a regional solid waste management facility and new water and sewer systems for a number of communities under boil water advisories. The program is also contributing significantly to Winnipeg's downtown revitalization.

The **Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program** provided \$29 million to 91 projects in its first year. In April 2002, the program announced over \$17 million for projects in 137 communities, the majority of which will be upgraded water and wastewater services. Nearly 70 per cent of the projects announced this year are "green" municipal projects.

As of April 2002, the **Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program** had announced 249 projects worth



Waste water treatment facilities are among many of the "green" infrastructure projects being undertaken across the West.

\$123.3 million. One recently completed project is the Rotary Millennium House in Edmonton for disadvantaged residents of the inner city. They now live in a residence that offers them comfort, safety and affordability.

The **Canada-British Columbia Infrastructure Program** is investing \$800 million over five years to improve quality of life in the province by focusing on "green" projects for water treatment and waste management. As of the end of June 2002, 94 green projects have been funded, representing an investment of more than \$239 million throughout the province.

The long-term sustainability offered by this program will benefit western communities for years to come.

Western Economic Diversification Canada is responsible for implementing the program in the western provinces on behalf of the federal government.

To find out more about the Infrastructure Canada Program, visit the WD Web site at: www.wd.gc.ca/eng/ced/infrastructure. ♦

Supporting Development in

ACCESS

ALBERTA

July - September 2002

Government of Canada Info-Fair Visits Grande Prairie in October

If you're looking for the best opportunity to reach all Government of Canada departments that provide assistance to business, then mark Friday, October 18th on your calendar.

The Grande Prairie Small Business Info-Fair is a one-stop source of business information for small business. It will showcase over 30 federal government programs and services available to small and medium-sized businesses at the Grande Prairie Inn. Doors will open at 9:00 a.m. and representatives will be available to explain program details.

Throughout the day, business seminars will be offered on various topics, and you'll have the opportunity to hear success stories from area entrepreneurs.

The seminar schedule will be available online beginning in September at: www.wd.gc.ca/eng/events/ab.html.

The Info-Fair and business seminars are open to the general public from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and are **free-of-charge!**

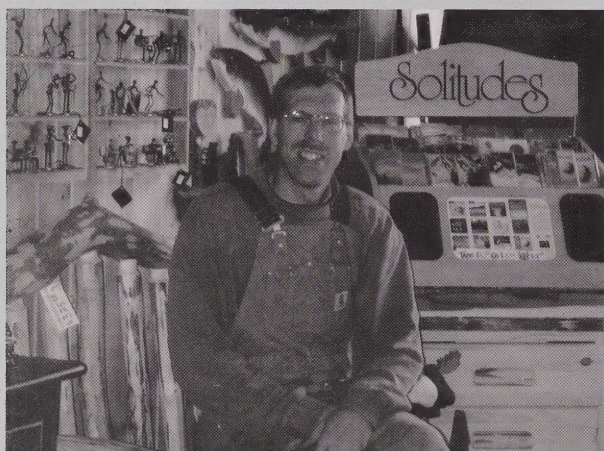
Register to attend the Info-Fair and seminars by contacting SMEDA Business Development Corporation at (780) 354-8747. You can also register online at: www.wd.gc.ca/eng/events/ab.html beginning in September.

For further information, contact Barb Steele at (780) 495-4982 or 1-888-338-WEST (9378). ♦

Infrastructure Canada Program

ACCESS ALBERTA

Take a Seat at the Rivers Edge



Stuart Grant is right at home at The Rivers Edge Log Works in Blairmore.
(Photo courtesy of Crowsnest Pass BDC)

The Crowsnest Pass in southern Alberta is famous for the Frank Slide. But a stone's throw away from the Crowsnest River in Blairmore you'll find an "all Canadian made shop" looking to build its own legend in the old mining town.

After managing a store in Jasper that sold log furniture, Stuart Grant caught the entrepreneurial bug. He knew he could build similar furniture of even a better quality and liked the idea of owning a shop and being his own boss.

Along with his wife Akiko and their young family, Stuart relocated to Blairmore in 1998 and opened **The Rivers Edge Log Works**. Stuart cuts his own logs, peels them and produces beautifully handcrafted log and pine furniture – beds, chairs, tables, chests and benches. Akiko manages the retail store

which features Stuart's furniture, as well as unique gifts and collectibles from home-based businesses from across Canada.

Success didn't come easy and it wasn't until the couple had the opportunity to purchase their own building that the business took off. They visited the **Crowsnest Pass Business Development Corporation** for help. "For a while things were touch and go. We didn't know if we would survive," indicated Stuart. "Without the assistance of the Crowsnest Pass BDC, we would not have been able to buy our own building. Now we control our own destiny."

Today, Blairmore's Pass Powerkeg Ski Hill features Stuart's unique benches, as well as ski/board racks, and the Cinnamon Bear Bakery & Café has included his furniture as part of their décor.

As The Rivers Edge evolves from a seasonal tourism business to a year-round success thanks to the increased sales and repeat customers for Stuart's furniture, the Grants are looking to expand in order to increase the floor space and feature more Canadian artisans they currently can't accommodate.

The Crowsnest Pass BDC is a partner in Western Economic Diversification Canada's business service network. For more information about the Community Futures office in your area, call 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit www.wd.gc.ca/eng/pos/cfdc/alberta.asp for a complete listing.

For more information about The Rivers Edge Log Works, contact (403) 562-2724 or visit their Web site at: www.logfurniture.ca. ♣

Supporting Development in

ACCESS ALBERTA

Thinking Outside the Box

Since 1999, the **Olds College Centre for Innovation (OCCI)** has proven that “thinking outside of the box” really works. Now in its third year of operation, it has successfully built an exciting new organization dedicated to meeting the rapidly changing requirements of Alberta’s agri-business and resource sectors.

Established as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Olds College, OCCI develops new products and technologies for the agriculture, horticulture, forestry and resource sectors. In business terms, it offers applied research services in four key areas: composting and waste management, development of new products from crops and processing, research and testing services for natural fibre producers, and equipment design and development.

Their vision is to be recognized as a dynamic, flexible and virtual organization. Lofty goals perhaps, but just a few years after they opened their doors, the Centre has already generated \$1.1 million in contract research. In addition, it has secured an \$800,000 contract with the Canadian Foundation for Innovation for three applied research infrastructure projects and recently received approval in principle for a \$3.5 million micro-processing facility for new products from crops.

The Centre offers scientific staff, Olds College students and industry partners with enhanced learning opportunities that will help Alberta’s agriculture industry expand. OCCI is strategically located in central Alberta and has the potential to become a valuable resource to rural entrepreneurs and businesses.

The Olds College Centre for Innovation’s success can be traced to strong support from the Alberta government, as well as college, community, industry and other government stakeholders.



Perhaps the biggest highlight so far for OCCI has been the official opening of the \$1.2 million Dr. Robert Turner Research Centre in November 2001.

However, OCCI also acknowledges the important role of Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), particularly in the start-up phase. “WD’s support was absolutely critical to the OCCI in our early stage,” said Rick Tofani, CEO. “WD funding has helped us lever other funds from both government and industry.”

The Centre is strengthening its research capacity through operating funding agreements with various provincial and federal agencies, as well as through research partnerships with private industry. WD also assisted the College to acquire key laboratory equipment used to perform microbiological analyses in the areas of plant stress and physiology, and quantity control.

For more information about the Olds College Centre for Innovation, contact (403) 507-7970 or 1-877-815-OCCI, or visit their Web site at: www.occi.ab.ca ♦

Infrastructure Canada Program

ACCESS ALBERTA

Greater Edmonton Competitiveness S

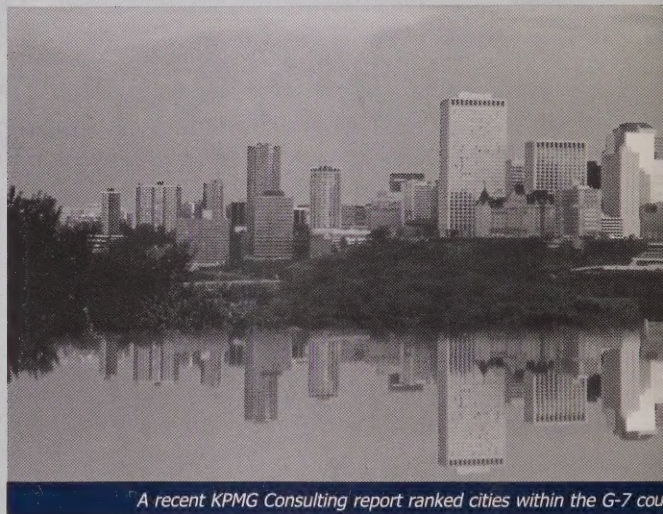
by Carmen Carvajal

In the Greater Edmonton region, industry and public sectors know that internal competition is not necessarily the key to forging a strong and sustainable economy. By working together they will have a better chance of securing prosperity for all. But, to arrive at that point, they need a reliable road map. That is why they are enthusiastic about the **Greater Edmonton Competitiveness Strategy**.

The primary goal of the Competitiveness Strategy is to help transform Greater Edmonton's already booming resource-based economy into a "next generation" economy, one based on regional clusters exporting their expertise to the world. This collective effort has mapped the economic strengths of the area and outlined many cooperative actions to build on those strengths.

Led by **Economic Development Edmonton (EDE)**, the economic development initiative is a partnership between Edmonton and 22 surrounding municipalities, and is engaging over 1,200 participants from the private and public sector. Western Economic Diversification Canada has been a major financial and consultative contributor since the inception of the initiative, providing \$1.69 million.

The Competitiveness Strategy uses an industry cluster approach. Each cluster is comprised of three levels: similar companies with related products or services, their joint suppliers, and supporting economic foundations (e.g. educational institutions, physical infrastructure, human resources, business climate and quality of life). The cluster teams meet regularly to develop a common vision and generate new initiatives, and can become economic drivers for a community.



A recent KPMG Consulting report ranked cities within the G-7 countries.

The Competitiveness Strategy identified eight clusters: advanced manufacturing; agri-food and forest products; biomedicine and biotechnology; engineering and technical services; information and media services; oil, gas and chemicals; tourism and entertainment; and transportation and logistics. Not only are cluster teams generating new economic initiatives, but their respective sectors are benefiting from an increased level of cooperation, networking and communication, and enhanced entrepreneurial energy.

Flagship initiatives constitute another important aspect of the Competitiveness Strategy. These initiatives will identify and address problems and opportunities common to multiple clusters.

Since its official launch in January 2001, the initiative has seen many positive outcomes. "The Greater Edmonton

Strategy Builds on Economic Momentum



Edmonton came out on top as the best city to do business with.

Competitiveness Strategy has made substantial progress, particularly in the engineering and technical services, biomedicine and biotechnology, and oil, gas and chemicals industry clusters. The skills pipeline and transportation infrastructure flagship initiatives have also made significant progress in the very short term for which they have been operating," says Allan Scott, president and CEO of EDE. "Looking ahead, further work on behalf of the Competitiveness Strategy in 2002 will lead to more longer-term benefits throughout Greater Edmonton."

It is clear that the strategy is quickly evolving thanks to the commitment of the region, private and public sponsors, and industry leadership in the various clusters and flagships. The Competitiveness Strategy cluster teams delivered 31 major achievements in 2001. Among them are:

- Selection of Edmonton as the site of Canada's new \$120 million National Institute of Nanotechnology
- Execution of a Biomedicine, Biotechnology and E-Health Investor Forum in October 2001
- Planning for an International Winter Construction Symposium and Exhibition for November 2002
- A report and action plan to help develop a more balanced and responsive labour pool
- Sponsoring of initiatives to aid in technology commercialization and investor/entrepreneur education

The Conference Board of Canada predicts that Edmonton will lead the nation in the year 2002 with a 3.2 per cent growth rate in GDP. A report recently issued by KPMG Consulting ranked Edmonton as the best city to do business, within the G-7 countries. Edmonton's housing market, manufacturing and construction sectors are booming. Nonetheless, despite such an outstanding economic outlook, the Competitiveness Strategy participants are working harder than ever. They know that it is necessary to build on this momentum in order to secure sustainable prosperity.

For more information about the Greater Edmonton Competitiveness Strategy, contact Economic Development Edmonton at (780) 424-9191 or by e-mail at: edinfo@ede.org. ♦

In addition to the growth that the Greater Edmonton region is already projected to achieve in the period of 2002-2005, the Competitiveness Strategy expects to achieve:

- 35,000 new jobs
- \$2.6 billion increase in GDP
- \$1,840 increase in per capita annual buying income
- \$60 million in property/business tax benefits to Greater Edmonton

Infrastructure Canada Program

ACCESS ALBERTA

Hotline Connects Job Seekers from Across Canada to Fort McMurray

The oil sands in Fort McMurray are gaining a national reputation as Canada's major energy source. In August 2000, community organizations identified the need for an information hotline to deal with inquiries about employment, business and contract opportunities, housing and the community.

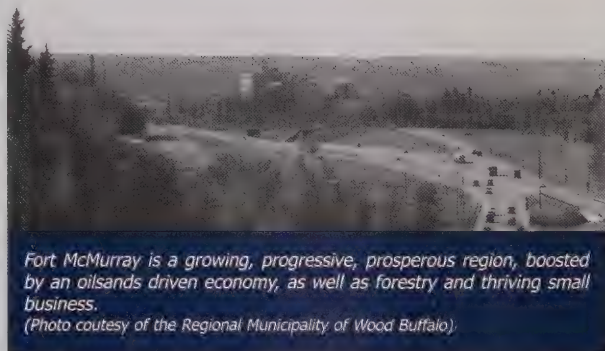
The **Fort McMurray Regional Business Development Centre** took a leadership role and secured assistance from Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) to get the **Fort McMurray Hotline** up and running.

The service was launched in June 2001 and is a huge success. Over 4,000 calls were received in the first nine months of operation. Eight out of 10 callers are looking for work.

"Hotline operators present a positive impression of Fort McMurray as the first *real* voice a caller hears," indicated Gwenneth Lauder, Hotline coordinator. "They help steer job seekers in the right direction by providing them with the information they need."

Potential employees are asked a few questions about their qualifications, education and experience. Unskilled individuals are given a realistic picture of job prospects and salary expectations. The operator makes referrals to job postings and to employers who may be hiring in the future. Applicants are encouraged to check out Web sites of the oil sands companies and carefully follow the instructions for submitting resumes. And as an added service, operators will contact the caller if they become aware of a future job opportunity.

Employers looking for workers with a certain skill set often contact the Hotline, who act as a facilitator for both employers and prospective employees.



*Fort McMurray is a growing, progressive, prosperous region, boosted by an oilsands driven economy, as well as forestry and thriving small business.
(Photo courtesy of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo)*

One caller later wrote the Hotline, commenting: "Thank you for sending me, in detail, the requested information about the job contacts and accommodations in Fort McMurray." Another said: "I was offered a job with one of the companies you referred, and will be moving my family to Fort McMurray in two weeks. Thanks!"

The Fort McMurray Hotline is truly a community-based partnership service. It maintains a positive working relationship with organizations representing government, education, business, health care, social agencies, employment services, First Nations, housing, unions, industry, economic development, recreation and non-profit groups.

To reach the Fort McMurray Hotline, call 1-877-791-0979 toll-free or (780) 792-5200. ♦

Supporting Development in

ACCESS ALBERTA

Catching Up with Old Friends

Since our first newsletter in the Fall/Winter 1988, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) has featured many Alberta clients. Where are they today and what are they going? Here are just two companies that we caught up with.

In the Summer 1989, WD introduced **Educo International Inc.** of Sherwood Park who had discovered the original bead and wire mazes we see so often in doctor's offices. Company President Kathy Klaus acquired a licence to manufacture and distribute the original collection.

Today, 14 years later, they have designed over 70 innovative models, including a line of activity table centres for public play areas, and developed a new line for Toys R Us. The Original Super Maze was inducted into the Parenting Toy Hall of Fame in 1994, and they have received 40 other international awards for their educational toys.

"Because the toy does not require language or translation, it has universal appeal," indicated Klaus. "That is part of what makes it a huge success." She also noted that the quality of their product is respected worldwide.

"WD's **International Trade Personnel Program** is excellent," added Klaus. "It has helped us to cover the substantial costs in training a new person in issues surrounding international marketing." Exports to the U.S., Japan, the U.K. and a dozen other countries account for 90 per cent of Educo's sales.

Educo International Inc.
(780) 467-9772 www.educo.ca

Calcana Industries Inc. was just getting started in Cochrane developing new low intensity infra-red gas heaters when they appeared in the Fall 1990 newsletter. In 1994, they developed a second line of heaters and obtained CSA certification. Today, Calcana enjoys steady sales increases in Canadian and U.S. markets.

"Our heaters are better designed and engineered for extreme conditions than other products on the market," indicated John Vancak, Calcana president. "We offer our clients quality products and service support, including a 24-hour staffed service line."

The Sunray™ and SR Series heaters are economical and durable, generate fuel savings up to 40 per cent, provide quick heat recovery and are easy to service and install. They can be installed in industrial buildings such as aircraft hangars, depot style stores and warehouses, residential garages and ice arenas, and are being introduced into outdoor restaurant and home patios.

Vancak noted that WD's early support helped them build a stable platform that was critical to getting started. Calcana has since moved to Calgary in order to better service their clients and reduce transportation costs.

Calcana Industries Inc.
(403) 777-0806 www.calcana.com

Infrastructure Canada Program

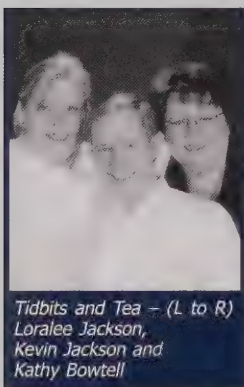
ACCESS ALBERTA

From Fine Dining to Baskets, Strategic Alliances are Helping Women Entrepreneurs Across Alberta

by Shawna Bourke

Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association

On opposite ends of the province two ambitious female entrepreneurs pursue their business vision. One has converted a century old church into a fine dining restaurant and the other publishes an industry magazine and runs a corporate gift basket business. Clients of the **Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association (AWEIA)**, both ladies demonstrate how strategic alliances have improved their businesses and created economic development.



*Tidbits and Tea - (L to R)
Loralee Jackson,
Kevin Jackson and
Kathy Bowtell*

Loralee Jackson, owner of **Tidbits and Tea**, started a teahouse with partners Kevin Jackson and Kathy Bowtell in 1998 in Vermillion. Their business has since transformed from a teahouse featuring light lunches, to a fine dining restaurant and local tourist attraction. Jackson's AWEIA business coach matched her up with industry mentors who served as her strategic alliances, and she now offers the same opportunity to others

through the Trans-Vocational Program at Lakeland College.

Cathy Papp has owned and operated **Basketry** in Lethbridge for 13 years. She works closely with other owners of basket businesses from across Alberta to exchange ideas in a formal alliance that encourages them to work together to achieve greater individual success.

Papp also participates in monthly Networking Links and Enterprise Circles, hosted by AWEIA Business Coach Bonnie Elliot. These events bring female entrepreneurs together to build business skills, while creating networks and referral opportunities.



*Basketry owner Cathy Papp
and AWEIA Business Coach
Bonnie Elliot*

InTouch Lines of Learning Teletraining is a series of one-hour interactive business training sessions offered over the phone.

AWEIA joined forces with its sister organizations in B.C., Saskatchewan and Manitoba to offer ***InTouch*** as an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to learn from business experts and share ideas with women from across Western Canada.

For more information on creating strategic alliances through the services offered by AWEIA, visit their Web site at: www.aweia.ab.ca, e-mail at info@aweia.ab.ca or call 1-800-713-3558.

AWEIA is a non-profit organization helping Alberta women start and grow their own businesses. It is supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada and corporate sponsors. ♦

Supporting Development in Rural Canada

Provided by the Rural Secretariat

The **Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP)** is the Government of Canada's strategy for supporting economic development in rural, remote and northern communities. The CRP ensures that federal programs, policies and activities are administered in non-urban regions of the country.

Listening to Canadians living in these areas and providing support at the grassroots level are two of the cornerstones of the CRP. Through the **Rural Development Initiative**, the CRP supports community-based projects that test new ways of promoting sustainable community development. The projects address areas identified by rural Canadians as priorities, such as the need for better access to financial resources, employment programs for youth and improved program delivery.

The Rural Development Initiative is complemented by the **Canadian Agricultural Rural Communities Initiative (CARCI)**. CARCI's objective is to enhance the viability of rural and remote communities, particularly those communities affected by changes in the agricultural sector. Canadian citizens and organizations can apply for CARCI funding under one of the four program components: research projects; workshops, conferences and seminars; partnership projects; and rural coordination organizations.

The Rural Development Initiative and CARCI are integral parts of the Canadian Rural Partnership. These programs

help support local solutions to local challenges. They range from the creation of a comprehensive Web site that serves northern Albertans, to the development of a sustainable agricultural plan in the Upper Skeena region of B.C.

Through these initiatives and other tools, the CRP is working to enhance the quality of life in rural communities and to equip them to compete in the global economy. This is being achieved through the coordination and leadership of partners who create greater awareness and improved access to products, services and information.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Rural Secretariat provides the overall leadership and coordination for a cross-government approach to rural issues. The secretariat brings together representatives from federal government departments and agencies to discuss rural issues. It also promotes dialogue between rural Canadians and the federal government. Rural teams, which are evolving to include other levels of government and stakeholders, are responsible for implementing the CRP in each province and territory.

For more information on the CRP, visit their Web site at: www.rural.gc.ca. You may also contact Nathanael Olson (Alberta/B.C./Yukon/NWT/Nunavut) at (403) 292-4922 or Darell Pack (Saskatchewan/Manitoba) at (204) 984-6510. ♦



Community Futures: Meeting the

Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) across the West are members of Western Economic Diversification's network of business service partners. These offices deliver services that reach into every area of the West.

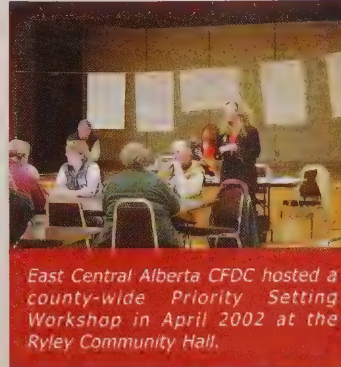
The volunteer-led, non-profit corporations take a grassroots approach to community economic development, with a focus on job creation in areas outside major urban centres. Each corporation is independent. They deliver their programs in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the communities they serve. From strategic economic planning to business advisory services and from loan assistance to self-employment programs, Community Futures is helping *all* entrepreneurs, including youth and those with disabilities.

Community Futures Development Corporations help to build strong, vibrant and sustainable communities through economic development and diversification. The following four examples exemplify the diversity of projects under way to integrate social and economic needs in communities that have a vision of prosperity for the future.



Beaver County extends 120 km from the Cooking Lake Moraine just east of Edmonton to the Saskatchewan border. From a wooded and hilly area, the landscape gradually changes into rich, flat farmland.

Like other rural communities across the Prairies, Beaver County is troubled with issues of economic and social



East Central Alberta CFDC hosted a county-wide Priority Setting Workshop in April 2002 at the Ryley Community Hall.

vitality as changes affect the agriculture industry and youth migrate to urban centres.

The difference between this region and many others is the proactive approach the five

municipal councils have taken to manage their future. The **Beaver County Community Resilience Project** was based on a regional model of rural community flexibility. The results have assisted in developing a strategy for the communities to build on their strengths, while addressing their weaknesses.

East Central Alberta CFDC accessed funding through the Canada Rural Partnership program to form a steering committee to lead the region through a community development plan. The CFDC is administering and facilitating many of the activities over the life of the project.

Recently, the *Vision Towards Tomorrow Steering Committee* adopted a vision of a prosperous, resourceful region reflecting equality and community pride. By 2010, its mission is to cultivate growth through regional cooperation and economic diversification.

Karen Wright, CEO of East Central Alberta CFDC, says, "The first phase was to complete an economic and social

e Needs of Rural Entrepreneurs

resources inventory using geographic information systems (GIS) technology. The inventory enhanced the ability of the communities in Beaver County to plan and make informed decisions for a sustainable future. The next phase will focus on community outreach.”



Dan Devita (L) and Pam Krompocker (RC) of the CFDC of the Powell River Region accept the Minister's Award from WD B.C. Region Assistant Deputy Minister Ardath Paxton-Mann (LC) and Dave Wilbur, past Chair of the CFDA of B.C. The award was presented at the March 2002 General Meeting for CFDA.

Recognizing that their geographical location presented challenges, the **CFDC of the Powell River Region** undertook

an innovative project to help strengthen the feasibility and viability of rural merchants. Many of the businesses

on Vancouver Island are too small to be successful, so the CFDC provided an alternative – **Zoombuy**. The world is now their marketplace.

Zoombuy addresses two important barriers for entry into e-business: cost and accessibility. This full-fledged e-service for small and medium-sized enterprises includes full Web presence development, custom graphic design, shopping cart services, real time credit card authorization, domain name registration and ongoing site administration. Most of

these services are free, with the exception of a low monthly hosting fee.

Not only does the CFDC provide rural businesses with access to affordable e-commerce services and comprehensive client services, but it also helps to educate entrepreneurs about the realities of using the Internet as a marketing tool.

The program has been a huge success. Businesses from other areas of B.C. and Alberta have accessed the services of local merchants. These merchants run the gamut from bed and breakfast vacations to art galleries, alternative medicines to hardwood flooring, and handmade instruments to beauty products.

CFDC General Manager Pam Krompocker says, “Since Zoombuy was launched in January 2000, virtual storefronts on the site have increased by 45 per cent and total sales have increased for these businesses by 216 per cent.”

If your region depends heavily on agriculture and the industry is changing, then it is obvious that you need to change, too. With help from **NEICOM Developments** (the CFDC in Manitoba’s Interlake area), the Stonewall and District Chamber of Commerce invited local representatives to discuss the decline of profits from cereal grain and oilseed production. This decline has adversely affected the social fabric of the region. The outcome of this meeting was the establishment of the



Borage is one of the test crops being explored in the Stonewall area.

Stonewall and District Innovative Crops Committee – a project-specific partnership of community organizations, local governments and

area residents. The committee is evaluating the market potential of existing and innovative crops, particularly those used in the nutraceutical and functional food industries. It is also studying the potential of value-added processing industries for the area.

A market analysis-research study will form the foundation for the next phases of the project. In Phase Two, crop test plots will compare ways to optimize production for the Interlake microclimate. In Phase Three, NEICOM will develop a detailed feasibility study of production and processing opportunities, as well as pro-forma business plans. The plans will help entrepreneurs enter these industry sectors with minimal expense.

“The committee hopes to provide area farmers with crop diversity alternatives that will create local business opportunities, in turn creating local employment and economic prosperity for the region,” says Doug Erdman, COO of NEICOM Developments.



Visions North CFDC serves a vast region of northern Saskatchewan that covers 25 per cent of the province. The district faces a huge challenge: it has only *one* retail banking location serving the entire area. This lack of financial services often contributes to remote communities being unprepared and unable to participate in today’s electronic economy.

The CFDC undertook a **Northern Community Banking** study to identify secure sites for cash deposits, a secure carrier who could transport the deposits to financial

institutions, and a community access centre within each community. Researchers noted that, typically, cash in the communities is depleted quickly, creating credit risks and a dependency on credit from local retailers. Often,



Aerial view of the community of Deschambault Lake (pop. of approximately 1500, economic base is commercial fishing).

locally owned businesses survive with less than perfect management skills, are unable to deal with cash flow issues and end up as trapped as their customers in a credit cycle.

As the study winds down, Visions North General Manager Vicki Heppner says there will be either a proposal that meets the needs of area residents and the banks, or an indication why one won’t work. “The success of the project will be self-evident. If not, it will identify a different starting point, a critical point,” says Heppner. “For remote communities to grow and employ their citizens, a way must be found to participate in the current economy.”

Visions North hopes to build the capacity to increase economic activity, decrease unemployment and enhance the earning potential of individuals. ♦

For links to the Community Futures offices in your region, visit the WD Web site at:
www.wd.gc.ca/eng/pos/cfdc/xindex.html.

The World is Changing! Do You Have the Courage to Creatively Change with It?

by Bob "Idea Man" Hooey

Business, at its essence, is based on innovation – solving problems or fulfilling the needs, wants and desires of our clients. Here's a potpourri sample of how to take advantage of opportunities to expand or unlock your business potential.

- **What business are you REALLY in?** Keep asking this question and keep adapting your business to keep it fresh. Hint: Think in terms of customer benefits. What do your customers get when they deal with you? What do they really want?
- **Take an idea from another industry and adapt it** to suit both your clients' needs and yours (e.g. air miles/coffee cards/Buy 10 Get One Free promotions).
- **Try something again that didn't work the FIRST time.** It might work now with changes in technology, resources, client needs and attitudes.
- **Use a different material or process** to do a traditional job. Creativity counts!
- **Combine two or more products or services to create a new one.** Perhaps you can work with a strategic partner or ally to develop a new service or product that will bring mutual benefit.
- **Take advantage of trends** or changing interests in the marketplace. This is where your customer service focus will help a lot!
- **Look for ways to be a value-added company or person,** focusing on real customer service. How can you personally make changes to what you bring to your work?

Being creative is often as simple as being willing to attempt new or unfamiliar activities. Creativity is what solves your problems and builds your long-term business.

Looking at your business with fresh eyes and from different perspectives is one secret in tapping into your inner genius and accessing your **Creative S.O.U.L.** (Seeker of wisdom, Openness to people and ideas, Unlimited energy and a high Level of risk and adventure).

Creative Thoughts

Break-out-of-the-Box Thinking to jog your problem solving skills. You can create novel ideas by NOT following expectations, rules, assumptions, long-standing traditions, or company history or policy. Go against the grain and the status quo to find the ultimate solution you need.

Just for a moment, **remove the speed limits from your mind** and challenge your traditional linear thinking. Look at your problem or idea. Ask yourself a few questions to trigger your creative juices. This will allow you to change the way you look at them. A change of perspective can change results productively.

Bob "Idea Man" Hooey is a public speaker whose techniques have been successfully applied by thousands of professionals in seven countries spanning three continents. Bob frequently contributes to North American consumer and trade publication, and is the author of eight books and business enhancement success tools that reinforce his programs. For more information, visit his Web site at www.ideaman.com or call (780) 736-0009. ♣

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Government of Canada Seeks Input on Innovation Strategy

The Government of Canada is calling on business, labour, academia, the volunteer sector and all Canadians to define an action plan that will help to achieve Canada's Innovation Strategy. The strategy, launched in February by Industry Minister Allan Rock and Human Resources Development Minister Jane Stewart, includes a plan for comprehensive discussions with all stakeholders.

There is a growing consensus among business leaders, entrepreneurs, unions, academics and all levels of government that Canada's future depends on our ability to innovate in all sectors of our economy and in all regions of the country.

Regional Innovation Summits will allow business, entrepreneurs, municipal government, colleges and universities, and the non-profit sector in communities across the country, to contribute their voice to the national strategy. The local and regional perspective, from coast to coast, will be key to Canada's success. Summits will be held in cities and rural communities throughout Western Canada, culminating in a national summit this fall. "Do It Yourself" kits will enable groups

to initiate their own discussions at the community level or to submit ideas directly to the government.

The federal Innovation Strategy was launched with the release of two complementary papers. They outline factors

that will drive economic growth and social development over the next decade.

Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity examines the role of innovation in the Canadian economy and defines four key priorities:

- **Knowledge Performance:** Create knowledge, bring ideas to market more quickly and increase investment in research and development.
- **Skills:** Ensure that Canada has highly qualified people with the skills for a knowledge-based economy.
- **The Innovation Environment:** Modernize regulatory policies to support innovation excellence while protecting our quality of life.
- **Strengthening Communities:** Support innovation at the local level so communities can continue to attract investment and opportunity.

Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians calls for a collaborative approach among all sectors of society to ensure Canadians have the necessary tools in a knowledge-based economy. The paper outlines goals for children and youth, post-secondary education, the adult labour force and immigration.

To obtain a copy of *Achieving Excellence*, *Knowledge Matters* or the *Do It Yourself Kit*, or for more information about the dates and locations of Regional Innovation Summits in your province, visit www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca or call 1-800-O-CANADA (1-800-622-6232). ♦